



Life Course

Childhood Risk Factor

Brief Name

Mothers Experiencing Stressors During Pregnancy

Indicator

Percent of mothers experiencing three or more large life stressors in the 12 months before her baby was born.

Description

This measure combines thirteen potential stressors that a mother could face during pregnancy, including emotional (close family member getting sick or dying); financial (mother or her partner losing a job, not having enough money to pay bills, moving houses); partner (intense arguing or separating from partner, partner not wanting mother to be pregnant); or trauma-related stress (being in a fight, mother or partner being jailed, being homeless, close family member having a problem with drinking/drugs).

Importance

Maternal stress during pregnancy has the potential to trigger physiological changes in the fetus, leading to negative child outcomes (DiPietro, 2012). Women who experience stress during pregnancy, particularly stress related to their partner, are more likely to develop symptoms of post-partum depression, which may lead to negative outcomes for the child (Stone, 2015). This metric is included in the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Life Course Indicators because of the multi-generational impact, along with the long-term implications for public health (AMCHP, 2013). The data are collected through the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), providing a consistent and reliable source of information.

Limitations

Only 26 states report PRAMS data, limiting available state comparisons.

Mothers may experience other critical stressors during pregnancy that are not captured in any of these questions.

PRAMS is completed after the pregnancy, which may introduce bias due to self-reporting and recall.

Only pregnancies leading to live births are included in the PRAMS sample.

Source

PRAMS 2011, accessed at <https://chronicdata.cdc.gov/>. DiPietro, Janet A. "Maternal stress in pregnancy: considerations for fetal development." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 51.2 (2012): S3-S8. Stone, Sarah Lederberg, et al. "Stressful events during pregnancy and postpartum depressive symptoms." *Journal of Women's Health* 24.5 (2015): 384-393. AMCHP. Life Course Indicator: Stressors During Pregnancy. Life Course Metrics Project. (2013) accessed online at http://www.amchp.org/programsandtopics/data-assessment/LifeCourseIndicatorDocuments/LC-56_Stressors%20During%20Pregnancy_Final-12-16-2013.pdf.

WI	US	Best	Worst
22.5%*	25.2%	17.7%	39.9%
		GA	AK
Year			
2011			

Numerator

Number of mothers who reported three or more stressors in the 12 months before giving birth

Denominator

Mothers aged 18 to 44

*Indicates statistically significant difference from the US value at $p < 0.05$.